The Weekly Rehearſal.

Monday, September 27. 1731.

Floriferis ut apes in Saltibus omnia libant,
Omnia nos itidem. Lucret.

Fungar vice cotis, acutum
Reddere quæ ferrum valet, exſors ipſa ſecandi.
Hor.

THERE is nothing of greater Diſſervice to any Writer, than to appear in Public, under too forward and ſanguine an Expectation. For either he muſt elevate himſelf to the Fondneſs of his reader's Fancy, or both of them reſpectively be diſſatisfy'd, the reader by a Diſappointment, and the writer by a cold Reception. To prevent therefore any Inconvenience of this Nature, I ſhall here enter into the Deſign of the preſent Undertaking, and delineate the Idea I would have every reader conceive of it.

As to the reaſons that have engag'd me in it, ſeveral I find have been aſſign'd, all which I leave in the ſame Uncertainty and Suſpence, ſince there is no neceſſity of declaring upon Motives, where the Production is to be uſeful or entertaining. And to be ſo as far as poſſible is the profeſs'd Intention of this Paper: An Intention that takes in a wide Extent and Variety of Subjects. For what is there either in Art, or Nature, or Hiſtory, not to be accommodated to this View? The minuteſt Things when ſet in a due Light, and repreſented in apt Words will divert, and the greater are entertaining of themſelves. The Nature of this Deſign is confin'd then to no particular Argument, and in fact will be circumſcrib'd by nothing, but Diſcretion, Duty and good Manners. Theſe are the Fences and Boundaries I would think my ſelf oblig'd never to tranſgreſs: for however uneaſy a diſſolute and licentious Pen might be under theſe Limitations, yet without them there is certainly no real Pleaſure in any Action of Life, and with them there is room for the wideſt range of Thought, and the freeſt Excurſions of Fancy. Room enough every one will be ready to admit, but where ſhall we find the Powers to traverſe and cultivate it? Where the Man equal to it? This is an hard unneceſſary Queſtion. I need not go very far to ſay where he is not, neither is there any need of proceeding farther to ſhow where he is. For without any Pretence to Genius, or univerſal Capacity, an indifferent Hand may be allowed once in Seven Days to publiſh a Rehearſal, and perhaps to entertain. A Rehearſal, what can we ſuppoſe it, but in the general Courſe to be derivative? And what an Infinity of Sources have we to derive from? The ancient are yet living, and many of theſe later Ages will forever live with them. They are too pure to diſpleaſe, too numerous to fail us. And is it impoſſible for an induſtrious Hand to give them a different Courſe? May he not be uſeful to the Publick, by directing them where they will be valued, and where otherwiſe perhaps they would not have been enjoyed? This is all the Vanity that can be imputed to the Publiſher of a Rehearſal, for as the Paper takes it s Name, the Readers ſhould form their Opinion from the general Deſign. I am well aware of the exceeding and almoſt inſuperable Difficulty of being an Original in this knowing and polite Age. For beſides the fertile comprehenſive Genius that Nature muſt beſtow, how many other Qualities are requiſite to form a good and juſt writer? Eaſineſs of Mind and a competent Fortune are indiſpenſably neceſſary? For how can Wit and Humour be employ'd by a Man in Want? How can the Arrangement of Ideas be attended to, by him whoſe Affairs are in Confuſion. Travel & the moſt refin'd Converſation are to be added to theſe Accompliſhments: And beyond theſe, it were eaſy to ſelect *many others*, that enter the Character of an original Author, and diſcountenance thoſe who want them, from any Pretences to it? I would therefore decline this Path, and preſume no farther, than Mr. *Lock* has ſuggeſted every Man may, without any the leaſt Imputation of Vanity ——

'Since no one (ſays that great Author) ſees all, and 'we generally have different proſpects of the ſame 'Things according to our different Poſitions to it; 'it is not incongruous to think, nor beneath any 'Man to try, whether another may not have Notions 'of Things, which have eſcap'd him, and which 'his Reaſon would make uſe of, if they came into 'his Mind. Theſe Views and Attitudes we apprehend things in, are infinitely diverſify'd by the particular Circumſtances of Perſons. And there is, I am perſwaded, ſcarce any Man of the leaſt obſervation and remark, who has not been entertain'd with ſome appropriate Caſt of Thought, and Turn of Humour, even where he leaſt expected it. Should I therefore even venture beyond the Limits of a *Rehearſal*, this would be my Plea and Vindication: And ſhould I fail in the Attempt, what a great Pleaſure and Obligation would it be, for ſome of my better Readers to imitate the Example of the *Oxford* Scholar, who altho' he had acquir'd an excellent Hand at Muſic, yet afterwards falling into Melancholy, grew averſe to it, and could not be prevail'd upon by his Friends to touch it. They had but one way to excite him, and that, for ſome unskilful Hand to take his Violin and ſcrape upon it. He would then immediately ſnatch it from him, and in a kind of Reſentment, give it the utmoſt Elegance of Sound and Harmony.

What has been hitherto ſaid, conſiders this Paper only in the Eſſay-kind and a ſpeculative *View*; which is but one half the Deſign. For it is intended, to be a Narrative of whatever ſhall occur in Commerce in the Civil or Learned World as far as it deſerves our Attention, and comes within Notice. It will be the Endeavour of the Publiſher to procure the beſt Intelligence, and to digeſt it in the moſt ſuitable Method. He would aim to give this Sheet all the Variety and Aſpects it is capable of receiving for upon looking over a Liſt of the Subſcribers, he finds Names of every Quality, and preſumes there are Taſts of every Degree to be pleas'd. He owns himſelf under indelible Obligations to the Gentlemen that have advanc'd & favour'd the Deſign, and would not queſtion their continuance, 'till it deſerves their Diſeſteem, and becomes an Opiate, by having too great an Infuſion of the *Poppy*.